

DID THE BIBLE WRITERS COMMIT BIOLOGICAL BLUNDERS?

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

In our scientifically advanced age of cloning, biomimetics, Pentium processors, and the Internet, Americans' skepticism of biblical inerrancy appears to have reached an all time high (see Gallup and Lindsay, 1999, p. 36), especially in regard to matters of the Bible and science. How can a book, parts of which were written 3,500 years ago, have relevant scientific data? How could the Bible writers have made accurate statements about the heavens, long before the invention of telescopes and satellites? How could they have correctly classified animals before the development of Linnaean taxonomy? How could their references to zoology, botany, astronomy, and human anatomy be trustworthy?

Although the purpose of the Bible is not to provide a commentary on the physical Universe, Christians rightly conclude that, if the Bible was truly given "by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16-17; see Butt, 2007), then it should be free from the kinds of errors that books written by uninspired men contain (see Lyons, 2005, 2:5-25). The Bible may not be a textbook of biology, geology, or chemistry (the Bible is about God and redemption through Jesus Christ), but "wherever it deals with these fields, its statements are true and dependable" (MacRae, 1953, 110[438]:134). At least common sense demands such, if the writers really were "carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21, NIV).

According to many outspoken skeptics, the Bible writers made several scientific slip-ups. In a 1991 article titled "Scientific Boo-Boos in the Bible," Christian-turned-skeptic Farrell Till alleged: "One thing the Bible definitely is not is inerrant in matters of science.... [T]he Bible is riddled with mistakes" (1991a). Elsewhere Till challenged Christians to explain

why a divinely inspired, inerrant book has so many obvious scientific errors in it. And if the Bible is riddled with scientific errors, they should wonder too about the truth of that often parroted claim that the Bible is inerrant in all details of history, geography, chronology, etc., as well as in matters of faith and practice. It just ain't so! (1991b).

After criticizing the sacred writers for making various "mathematical miscalculations," Dennis McKinsey, author of *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy*, began a section titled "False Science," in which he stated: "A second major area in which the Bible fails miserably concerns the large number of statements that are patently erroneous from a scientific perspective. On numerous occasions the Bible makes statements that have little or nothing to do with scientific accuracy" (1995, p. 213). According to McKinsey,

Few topics activate biblical critics more than that of biblically based scientific contradictions and inaccuracies. That is readily understandable, in view of the fact that the book is a veritable miasma of poor science, bad math, and inaccurate geography, all with a heavy overlay of mythology and folklore.... Scripture is a veritable cornucopia of

scientific inaccuracies, falsehoods, and blunders (1995, pp. 209,230).

After listing 21 alleged scientific blunders in the Bible, McKinsey declared: "So that is biblical 'science.' Can you conceive of a more discordant deluge of deceptive delusion! Saddest of all is that **most of Christianity's most prominent spokesmen are fully cognizant of these biblical inanities, but have spared no effort to avoid them or minimize their importance**" (1995, p. 216, emp. added).

The truth is, faithful, Christian apologists have no reason to avoid McKinsey's or anyone else's questions about the reliability of the Bible. We may find many

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of the alleged discrepancies quite trifling (e.g., “Judas died twice;” “Jesus was a thief;” cf. McKinsey, 2000, p. 236), and wonder why such allegations would even be made, but we will not avoid questions about the Bible’s inspiration and inerrancy out of fear that the Bible may not be the Word of God. In fact, this issue of *Re&R* addresses McKinsey’s first four scientific slip-ups supposedly found in Scripture—four alleged mistakes that McKinsey believes are some of the very best proofs of the Bible’s errancy. We think you will be both disturbed and impressed by the answers—disturbed by the arrogance of skeptics’ allegations, yet impressed with how easily the truth can be discovered and error refuted.

ARE BATS BIRDS?

Everyone knows that a bat is not a bird. Bats are beakless, give birth to live young, and then nurse their young with milk until they are self-sufficient. A bat’s wings are featherless, and its body is covered with hair. Based upon such characteristics, scientists classify bats as mammals, not birds. So what does the Bible have to say about these creatures?

Bats are mentioned specifically only three times in Scripture. Isaiah warned Israel of the time when their idols would be cast away “into the holes of the rocks,

and into the caves of the earth...to the moles and bats” (2:19-20). The other two occurrences are found in the Pentateuch amidst laws regarding clean and unclean animals. In the book of Leviticus, Moses wrote:

“[T]hese you shall regard as an abomination **among the birds**; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, the kite, and the falcon after its kind; every raven after its kind, the ostrich, the short-eared owl, the sea gull, and the hawk after its kind; the little owl, the fisher owl, and the screech owl; the white owl, the jackdaw, and the carrion vulture; the stork, the heron after its kind, the hoopoe, **and the bat**” (11:13-19, emp. added).

Deuteronomy 14:11-18 also lists the bat among “birds.” But bats aren’t birds; they are mammals.

According to skeptics, the Bible’s classification of bats as birds represents one of the “scientific difficulties in the Bible” (Petrich, 1990). Such categorization is

supposedly “an obvious contradiction between the Bible and Science” (Khalil, 2007). Since “the bat, is, of course, a mammal, not a bird,” McKinsey listed Leviticus 11:19 as a “**superb** verse to use... to take enlightenment to the biblically benighted” (1995, pp. 744,14, emp. added; see also McKinsey, 2000, p. 213).

Was Moses, who “was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds” (Acts 7:22), so uninformed that he could not tell the difference between bats and birds? Was the God, Whom the Bible claims **created** bats and birds, unable to **classify** them properly? How is this **not** “an obvious contradiction between the Bible and Science,” as Ibrahim Khalil asserted?

The elementary answer to these questions is simply that God did not classify animals 3,500 years ago according to our modern classification system. As far back as Creation, God has divided animals into very basic, natural groups. He made aquatic and aerial creatures on day five and terrestrial animals on day six (Genesis 1:20-23,24-25). Similarly, in the first 23 verses of Leviticus 11, God divided the creatures into land animals (11:2-8), animals “that are in the water” (11:9-12), “birds” (11:13-19), and flying insects (11:20-23). He did not divide animals into mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. In fact, the group of “creeping things” mentioned later in Leviticus 11 (vss. 29-30; cf. Genesis 1:24-25) includes both mammals (e.g., mice) and reptiles (e.g., lizards). Clearly then, God divided animals according to their locomotion and environment rather than whether or not they have hair, lay eggs, and nurse their young.

Still, some may question why the English word “bird” is used for the category in which bats are listed. Why not simply call this group of animals “the flying creatures”? Actually, the term “bird” in Leviticus 11:13 (as well as Genesis 1:20-



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30) is translated from the Hebrew word *‘ôp*, which literally means “flying creatures” (Harris, et al., 1980, p. 654; cf. Brown, et al., 1993). It is derived from *‘ûp*, meaning to “fly, fly about, fly away” (Harris, et al., pp. 654-655). That this word is not used solely for “birds” is evident from Leviticus 11:20-23, where it is used with *sherets* in reference to “winged creeping things” (ASV), i.e., flying insects.

Admittedly, bats and birds have many differences, but one major commonality—the ability to fly—is the very characteristic God used to group them together. Why are no other mammals included in this list? Because “bats are the only mammals capable of true flight” (Jones, n.d.)—another reason why Bible translators have chosen to use the term “birds” in these passages, instead of the more general terms “flying creatures.” The rationale among translators seems to be, “if 99.9% of all ‘flying creatures’ are birds, then we will use the term ‘birds’ to translate the word (*‘ôp*).” Since Bible students should be very familiar with the figure of speech known as synecdoche (“by which a part is put for the whole”—“Synecdoche,” 2009; see Dungan, 1888, pp. 300-309; cf. Genesis 8:4; 21:7), they should have little trouble understanding why translators continue to use the term “birds” to categorize all the flying creatures, including bats. After all, bats make up a very small percentage of all of the animals that fly.

What’s more, notice that bats are placed at the **end** of the list of birds and just before the list of flying insects. This placement is entirely proper for the only living “flying creature” that is neither a true bird nor an insect.

To accuse God or the Bible writers of categorizing animals incorrectly based upon Linnaeus’ taxonomy in *Systema Naturae* (1735), or any other modern method of classifying animals, is tantamount to criticizing people for not organizing their wardrobe or cataloging their books according to your own methods. Whether a person chooses to organize his books alphabetically, sequentially, or topically, according to the Dewey Decimal Classification System or the Library of Congress Classification System, is a matter of judgment. Likewise, it is extremely unfair to judge ancient classification systems according to modern



man’s arbitrary standards. Skeptics are wrong for imposing their preconceived standards back onto an ancient text. Frankly, placing bats in the category of “flying creatures,” rather than with the land animals, “all that are in the water,” or the “creeping things,” makes perfectly good sense. Bats are, after all, “the world’s most expert **fliers**” (Cansdale, 1970, p. 135, emp. added), not walkers, crawlers, or swimmers. For Moses’ allusion to bats to be a true error, he would have had to say something to the effect of, “bats are not flying animals.”

Sadly, one significant question often left unexplored in a discussion of the Bible’s treatment of bats and birds is why God classified bats as “unclean.” Was this simply due to many bats’ eerie outward appearance, or that they are nocturnal cave dwellers? Could there be something more? Kyle Butt addressed the wisdom of God’s instruction about bats in his book, *Behold! The Word of God* (2007). The fact is,

...bats often carry rabies. While it is true that many animals are susceptible to rabies, bats are especially so. The American College of Emergency Physicians documented that between 1992 and 2002, rabies passed from bats caused 24 of the 26 human deaths from rabies in the United States (“Human Rabies...,” 2002). In the *Science Daily* article describing this research, “Robert V. Gibbons, MD, MPH, of Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Silver Spring, MD, reviewed the 24 cases of humans with bat rabies.” From his research, he advised “the public to seek emergency care for preventive

treatment for rabies **if direct contact with a bat occurs**” (“Human Rabies...,” 2002, emp. in orig.). Moses’ instruction to avoid bats coincides perfectly with modern research. Once again, the super human wisdom imparted through Moses by God cannot be denied by the conscientious student of the Old Testament (p. 124).

ARE RABBITS REALLY RUMINANTS?

Not only is Moses ridiculed for classifying a bat as a “bird,” but supposedly he made another mistake when he categorized the hare (or rabbit, NASB, NIV) as an animal that “chews the cud” (Leviticus 11:6; Deuteronomy 14:7). Cows, goats, sheep, and deer all have three- or four-chambered stomachs and bring already-chewed and swallowed vegetation up into their mouths to masticate once more. These animals “chew the cud” and are known as ruminants (“Ruminant,” 2009). A rabbit, however, does not have a three- or four-chambered stomach, nor does it bring previously swallowed food directly back up from its stomach to its mouth to chew again. For these reasons, skeptics have repeatedly criticized the Bible’s categorization of a rabbit as an animal that “chews the cud” (cf. Morgan, 2009; Wells, 2009; McKinsey, 1995, p. 214). [NOTE: Skeptics have also charged the animal mentioned in Leviticus 11:5 (Hebrew *shaphan*) of not being a cud chewer. Since, however, there is disagreement over the identity of this animal (translated “coney” in the KJV, ASV, and NIV, “rock badger” in the NASB and RSV, and “rock hyrax” in the NKJV), our discussion will center solely on the rabbit. If the *shaphan* resembles the rabbit, as some believe (see Day, 1996), then whatever arguments made for the rabbit’s inclusion in this list, might also apply to the *shaphan*.]

In an article titled “Bible Biology,” Farrell Till alleged: “The Leviticus writer made a serious biological error in describing them [rabbits and *shaphan*, which he contends are coneys—EL] as cud chewers.... [T]hey have no cuds to chew” (1991b). Elsewhere Till addressed this issue while simultaneously commenting on the scientific foreknowledge argument that Christians sometimes use as one of the proofs for the Bible’s inspiration:

Something that has long perplexed me is the way that inerrancy proponents can so easily find “scientific foreknowledge” in obscurely worded Bible passages but seem completely unable to see scientific error in statements that were rather plainly written. There are too many to discuss, but Leviticus 11:5-6 can serve as an example....They [rabbits and conies—EL] do not have compartmentalized stomachs that ruminants must have in order to be cud-chewers. Inerrancy champions have stumbled over these passages with various attempts to explain them....Yet after all has been said on the matter, the fact remains that hares and conies are not cud-chewers. But “Moses” said that they were.

One would think that if God were going to arm his inspired writers with scientific foreknowledge...he could have easily programmed them to know the simple fact that hares and conies aren’t cud-chewers” (1990; cf. Butt, 2007, pp. 103-130).

Once again, we are told the Bible is wrong. And, if the Bible is wrong about something as basic as whether or not rabbits “chew the cud,” how could anyone really believe that it was “given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16)?

First of all, critics must acknowledge the fact that we frequently describe things as they **appear** to take place and not necessarily as they **actually** happen. Meteorologists talk about the sun rising and setting, even though they know very well that actually the Earth is moving around the Sun, rather than vice versa. Doctors refer to a pregnant woman’s “water” breaking, when actually the liquid is amniotic fluid, and not merely H₂O. Furthermore, the **amniotic fluid** does not break, rather the **sac** containing the fluid bursts. The Bible writers also referred to things as they **appeared**. Paul, for example, in his discussion of Jesus’ resurrection, described some of the Christians who had died as having “fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:6). Did Paul know that these Christians had died, and not merely “fallen asleep”? Most certainly. Did the Bible writers know that the bat is not a blue bird? Of course. But what about the rabbit? Why is it listed among the cud chewers? It may be simply because rabbits “**appear** to chew their food very thoroughly like true ruminants, and this is what the law

is insisting on” (Wenham, 1979, p. 172, emp. added). Rabbits move their jaws and wiggle their noses in a way which **looks like** they are ruminating (Harris, 1990, 2:571). In fact, so convincing is this appearance that, according to Walter Kaiser, “Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778), to whom we owe the modern system of biological classification, at first classified the coney and the hare as ruminants” (Kaiser, et al., 1996, p. 158; cf. Keil and Delitzsch, 1996). In short, it may be that rabbits were listed as “cud chewers” based on simple observation.



Interestingly, though the rabbit (or hare) does not have a three- or four-chambered stomach from which it directly regurgitates previously swallowed food for a second chewing, it does practice what modern scientists call “refection.” In his classic work titled *All of the Animals of the Bible Lands*, George Cansdale addressed this process:

[A]t certain times of the day, when the hare is resting in its “form,” it passes droppings of different texture and appearance which it at once eats again, swallowing them after little or no chewing. It thus seems to be eating without taking any green stuff into its mouth. This is not, of course, the same thing as chewing the cud, but it has a similar effect. Like the ruminants, hares feed on bulky vegetable matter of which only a part can be digested, and the yield is largely the result of bacterial action inside the gut; the process of breaking down in to assimilable substances is started on the first passage through and taken a stage further on the second (1970, pp. 131-132).

According to biologist Leonard Brand, “Lagomorphs [hares and rabbits—EL] produce two kinds of fecal pellets which are produced at different times during the day. When the animals are active and feeding they produce the familiar hard

pellets. When they cease their activity and retire to their burrows or resting areas, they begin producing soft pellets which they eat as soon as they are passed” (1977). So although rabbits do not regurgitate previously swallowed food, they do swallow their partly digested food a second time. In fact, rabbits reingest more than half of their feces (Brand, 1977).

Still, the skeptic contends that the refecation of rabbits is not rumination. To compare the two supposedly represents a complete failure to explain away the biological error of the Leviticus writer. After all has been said about what hares appear to be doing and how their reingesting of caecotrophic materials [caecal feces—EL] achieves the same purpose as cud-chewing, **the fact still remains that hares do not chew the cud.... [T]he Leviticus writer was wrong when he said that hares and conies “chew the cud”** (Till, 1991b, emp. added).

But what did **Moses** mean when he used the phrase “chew the cud”? The word “cud” (Hebrew *gerah*) appears only 11 times in all of Scripture: seven times in Leviticus 11 and four times in Deuteronomy 14—every occurrence is in the two passages that give lists of clean and unclean animals. The rabbit is mentioned in each list as one that “chews the cud” (Leviticus 11:6; Deuteronomy 14:7). Therefore, if the only sections in Scripture where specific animals are mentioned that “chew the cud” include rabbits, then it is entirely proper to conclude that Moses simply defined “cud chewers” more broadly than modern scientists. Today, “cud chewers” (called ruminants) may be strictly defined as animals that “swallow their food without chewing it very much, store it temporarily in one of their stomach compartments, then later regurgitate it and rechew it thoroughly, and then swallow and digest it” (Wenham, 1979, pp. 171-172). It would be completely unjust, however, to force present-day definitions on a 3,500-year-old document. “As with Moses’ classification of bats as ‘birds,’ the modern definition of terms does not take away from Moses’ ability, or even his right, to use words as he sees fit to use them” (Kaiser, et al., 1996, p. 158). What’s more, as Jonathan Sarfati concluded: “It is inconceivable that someone familiar with Middle-Eastern animal life would make an easily corrected mistake about

The Supreme Court's Sexual Insanity

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The only legitimate way to evaluate and regulate human behavior is to look to the Creator. He is the One Who, in the words of the Founders of the American Republic, “created” all men, “endowed” them with life, provides them with “the laws of nature and of nature’s God,” and who functions as “the Supreme Judge of the world” (*Declaration of...*, 1776). If human opinion becomes the standard for judging ethical behavior, nothing but confusion, contradiction, and inconsistency can result.

The God of the Universe gave the Law of Moses, which He authored, to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai over three millennia ago. That Law enables people today to gain perspective on the proper attitude toward, and punishment for, criminal behavior. Since God is perfect and infinite in all of His attributes, His directives to Israel concerning proper punishment of unethical human behavior ought to serve as the ultimate model for any nation’s legal system. The Founders certainly accepted this conclusion. For example, *Declaration* signer John Witherspoon stated that the “Ten Commandments...are the sum of the **moral law**” (1815, 4:95, emp. added). Sixth President John Quincy Adams wrote:

The law given from Sinai was a civil and municipal as well as a moral and religious code; it contained many statutes...of universal application—**laws essential to the existence of men in society**, and most of which have been enacted by every nation, which ever professed any code of laws. But the Levitical was **given by God himself**; it extended to a great variety of objects of **infinite importance to the welfare of men....** Vain, indeed, would be the search among the writings of profane antiquity...to find so broad, so complete and **so solid a basis for morality as this decalogue** lays down (1848, pp. 61,70-71, emp. added).

Revolutionary War soldier and U.S. Congressman William Findley stated:

As a clear and exact knowledge of the **moral law** of nature is peculiarly important, in order to understand the whole system of revealed religion, I will state, that it pleased God to deliver, on Mount Sinai, a compendium of this holy law, and to write it with His own hand, on durable tables of stone. This law, which is commonly called the *ten commandments*, or *decalogue*, has **its foundation in the nature**

of God and of man, in the relation men bear to him, and to each other, and in the duties which result from those relations; and on this account it is **immutable and universally obligatory....** This was incorporated in the **judicial law** (1812, pp. 22-23, emp. added, italics in orig.).

Governor of New York and U.S. Senator DeWitt Clinton insisted: “The sanctions of the Divine law...cover the whole area of human action.... The laws which regulate our conduct are the laws of man and the laws of God” (as quoted in Campbell, 1849, pp. 307,305). Premiere Founder John Adams explained: “If ‘Thou shalt not covet,’ and ‘Thou shalt not steal,’ were not commandments of Heaven, they must be made inviolable precepts in every society, before it can be civilized or made free” (1797, 3:217). Other Founders could be cited who understood that many of the laws that God gave to the Hebrews are absolutely necessary to civil society. Recognizing and respecting how God expected the Jews to deal with criminal behavior is critical to sustaining American society.

For example, what was God’s view of kidnapping? As a matter of fact, kidnapping was a **capital crime** under the Law of Moses: “He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death” (Exodus 21:16; cf. Deuteronomy 24:7; 1 Timothy 1:10). The rape of an engaged or married woman was also a capital crime under Mosaic law (Deuteronomy 22:25-27). Sexual relations with a daughter also brought death (Leviticus 18:17; 20:12; cf. Ezekiel 22:11). The death penalty was typically carried out by stoning—which God obviously did not consider to be “cruel and unusual punishment.”

In view of these observations and realizations, one cannot help but be horrified, sickened, and shocked beyond belief at the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Kennedy v. Louisiana* (“U.S. Supreme Court Strikes...,” 2008). On the morning of March 2, 1998, Patrick Kennedy called 911 to report the rape of his eight-year-old stepdaughter. The reader will pardon the unspeakable, nightmarish details of the brutal assault described in the following quotation from the legal documents:



When police arrived at [Kennedy's] home between 9:20 and 9:30 a.m., they found [the girl] on her bed, wearing a T-shirt and wrapped in a bloody blanket. She was bleeding profusely from the vaginal area.... [She] was transported to the Children's Hospital. An expert in pediatric forensic medicine testified that [the girl's] injuries were the most severe he had seen from a sexual assault in his four years of practice. A laceration to the left wall of the vagina had separated her cervix from the back of her vagina, causing her rectum to protrude into the vaginal structure. Her entire perineum was torn from the posterior fourchette to the anus. The injuries required emergency surgery (*Kennedy v. Louisiana*, 2008, bracketed items added).

So detestable was this crime that even the High Court conceded: "Petitioner's crime was one that cannot be recounted in these pages in a way sufficient to capture in full the hurt and horror inflicted on his victim or to convey the revulsion society, and the jury that represents it, sought to express by sentencing petitioner to death" (*Kennedy v...*).

After further investigation, Kennedy was charged with the aggravated rape of his stepdaughter. Louisiana law allowed the district attorney to seek the death penalty for defendants found guilty of raping children under the age of 12. The jury unanimously determined that Kennedy should be sentenced to death. Kennedy appealed—all the way to the highest court in the state. But the Louisiana Supreme Court reaffirmed the imposition of the death sentence (Liptak, 2007). Kennedy again appealed—all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. In a 5-to-4 decision (split down ideological lines—liberal vs. conservative), **the U.S. Supreme Court reversed the Louisiana Court's decision, commuting Kennedy's death sentence.** The Court held that it is unconstitutional for states to impose the death penalty for the rape of a child where the assault did not result in the child's death. The death penalty in such a case would be deemed an exercise of "cruel and unusual punishment." Consider some of the remarks offered by the Court to justify this unconscionable, reprehensible, morally degraded decision:

Evolving standards of decency must embrace and express respect for the dignity of the person, and the punishment of criminals must conform to that rule.

When the law punishes by death, it risks its own sudden descent into brutality, transgressing the constitutional commitment to decency and restraint.

[T]he death penalty can be disproportionate to the crime itself where the crime did not result, or was not intended to result, in death of the victim.

Rape is without doubt deserving of serious punishment; but in terms of moral depravity and of the injury to the person and to the public, it does not compare with murder, which does involve the unjustified taking of human life (*Kennedy v...*).

In complete harmony with the leftist trend that commenced in the 1960s, in which focus shifted from the rights of the victim to the rights of the perpetrator, observe that the liberal element on the Court shows uncanny concern for the "dignity" of the criminal—with a corresponding disregard for the dignity of the victim. They also make the ridiculous comparison of lawful, prudent application of the death penalty to the unlawful, senseless crimes of the wicked—even implying that use of the death penalty conflicts with "decency and restraint." This would mean that God was indecent and unrestrained when He personally invoked the death penalty on millions throughout Old Testament history (e.g., the Flood), and when He also commands civil authority to do the same (e.g., Romans 13:1ff.). **The five justices**

clearly do not know God (cf. Romans 1:28; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Titus 1:16).

This contention (that death is justifiable only in cases where murder has been committed) implies that if Kennedy would have killed his stepdaughter after raping her, the liberals on the Court may have been more willing to invoke the death penalty (although they indicated that even then, the criminal would have had to commit "a particularly depraved murder"). But their unwarranted assumption pitches judicial evaluation into the realm of subjective human opinion that changes with the fickle whims of culture. In fact, the opinion of the Court based much of its rationale on whether there exists national consensus on the propriety of capital punishment in cases of child rape—as if objective moral value is determined by majority human opinion. The justices' exclusion of the principles of Christian morality that once guided American courts prevents them from acknowledging **the only ultimate authority** for deciding when the death penalty is warranted. No human has it within himself to legislate on such a matter. **Only God** can define the conditions under which humans may take the life of other humans.

What's more, to maintain that invoking the death penalty is a "disproportionate" act when the criminal does not actually kill his victim, commits one to the absurd position that the criminal can subject his victim to excruciating, sadistic torture, anguish, and



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suffering—as long as he keeps his victim alive. And he could persist in his assaults **for years**, with a child of **any age**, and still not receive the death penalty! The justices clearly have no grasp of, let alone sympathy for, the untold, unimaginable damage perpetrated, not only on the tender body of Kennedy's stepchild, but on that child's spirit. The emotional, psychological, mental, and spiritual havoc inflicted is indescribable and unfathomable—literally beyond comprehension. A part of that child was murdered, changing her forever. The average child subjected to such horrendous treatment is permanently ruined—doomed for the rest of her life to wander aimlessly with a tortured soul, a twisted outlook, and an unrecoverable existence. In fact, in one sense, death would be mercifully preferable to living with the aftermath. Ironically, the Court acknowledged this fact: "The attack was not just on her but **on her childhood....** Rape has a **permanent** psychological, emotional, and sometimes physical impact on the child.... We cannot dismiss the years of long anguish that must be endured by the victim of child rape" (*Kennedy v...*, emp. added). Yet, according to the majority of the Court, extending capital punishment to the rapist of a child would be "excessive," "cruel and unusual punishment" since America's "evolving standards of decency" "mark the progress of a maturing society." Indeed, the Court insisted that executing all child rapists "could not be reconciled with our evolving standards of decency and the necessity to constrain the use of the death penalty" (*Kennedy v...*). Unbelievable. If **anything** verifies that we as a society are **not** maturing, that we are, in fact, **devolving** from superior standards of decency and morality, it surely is our uncivilized, barbaric, unconscionable treatment of children in the last 35 years—from the butchery of abortion to the savagery of sexual abuse.

If God prescribed **death** for kidnappers, i.e., those who illegally seize and detain a child—before and without inflicting any harm on the child—imagine how God feels about the person who would subject a precious, innocent, little girl to the indescribable agony of savage, sexual assault. Indeed, a man who would commit such abominable, loathsome behavior is **depraved** and should be eliminated permanently from society. He has forfeited his right to live in

civil society. His action is of such gravity that he has **earned** death for himself (cf. "his blood be upon him"—Leviticus 20:9,13,27), and the rest of society deserves to be free of the inherent threat he poses to others. Those who reject this biblical assessment themselves possess degraded moral sensitivities and warped spiritual faculties. The decision by those five justices is despicable and unconscionable. They ought to be ashamed. They most certainly will be in eternity when they are called to account for their reckless, ruthless decision.

When our own governmental and judicial officials brush aside the moral principles authored by God, when they have allowed their moral sensibilities and sensitivities to be undermined by secularism and anti-Christian ideology, when they no longer seek to emulate the mind of God and organize their thinking in harmony with His views, when they do not "abhor what is evil" (Romans 12:9), the erosion of civil society is well underway and our nation is doomed to destruction.

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rabbits, and also inconceivable that the Israelites would have accepted a book as Scripture if it were contrary to observation” (1998, 20[4]:56), especially when the Book has so many negative things to say about the Israelites.

ARE FOUR-LEGGED FOWL FOR REAL?

Following the section in Leviticus 11 where various unclean birds are listed, verse 20 begins a new category with these words: “All **fowls** that creep, going upon all **four**, shall be an abomination unto you” (KJV, emp. added). Fowls on four legs? “Whoever heard of four-legged fowl?” (McKinsey, 1995, p. 213). Surely Bible believers would agree with critics who contend that “there are no birds that go around on four legs” (Morgan, 2009), unless, of course, they are mutants. So



why does Leviticus 11:20 refer to birds with four legs?

The problem in Leviticus 11:20 is not with God or His inspired writer, but with the King James Version’s translation of the verse. Moses was not referring to “birds,” but to “flying insects.” The Hebrew *sherets* ‘*ôp* is more accurately translated “winged creeping things” (ASV), “winged insects” (NASB, ESV, RSV), or “flying insects” (NKJV, NIV). Interestingly, in Deuteronomy 14:19, where these same creatures are discussed, the King James translators used the phrase “creeping thing that flieth” to translate the same Hebrew words (*sherets* ‘*ôp*) used in Leviticus 11:20. That this alleged contradiction is merely a translation issue has even been admitted by certain skeptics, including Farrell Till. Although Till chides the Bible writers elsewhere in his writings, he freely admits in this instance that “[f]our-legged fowls...would be a biological blunder indeed, but since **the context clearly indicated insects** in this passage, we won’t hold bibliolaters responsible for a translation flaw” (Till, 1991b, emp. added).

[NOTE: Although four-legged “fowls” are only found among mutated birds, we must not dismiss all “four-legged” flying creatures as biological impossibilities. Bats, mentioned one verse earlier (Leviticus 11:19), “**crawl on all fours**, with their long arms and flexible legs splayed out to the sides” (Zimmer, 1994, emp. added). What’s more, both history and the fossil record reveal that



extinct flying reptiles also had arms and claws attached to membranous wings (cf. Lyons and Butt, 2008, pp. 13-46). Though scientists believe these flying reptiles mainly walked upright, at the very least their “hands” would have been used for climbing trees and handling food (Zimmer)—they would have used “all fours.” While we certainly believe that the “four-footed-fowl” difficulty surrounding Leviticus 11:20 is merely a translation problem, and not a mistake by the inspired writer, some flying mammals and reptiles currently have (or had in the past) four limbs.]

GRASSHOPPERS DON’T WALK “ON ALL FOURS,” DO THEY?

All flying insects that creep on all **fours** shall be an abomination to you. Yet these you may eat of every flying insect that creeps on all **fours**: those which have jointed legs above their feet with which to leap on the earth. These you may eat: the locust after its kind, the destroying locust after its kind, the cricket after its kind, and the grasshopper after its kind. But all other flying insects which have **four** feet shall be an abomination to you (Leviticus 11:20-23, emp. added).

Skeptics admit that Leviticus 11:20 is not referring to four-legged fowl, but to “flying insects.” However, as critics have repeatedly noted, insects have **six** legs, not four. About these verses, Dennis McKinsey asked: “Whoever heard of four-legged insects? In fact, whoever heard of any four-legged creeping things that fly?” (1995, p. 213). He then listed this alleged discrepancy as another “superb verse to use” when talking with Christians about the blunders in the Bible (pp. 749,14). Steve Wells, author of *The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*, wrote mockingly: “You’d think that since God made the insects, and so many of them (at least several million species), that he would

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know how many legs they have” (2009). In her article titled “Scientific Errors in the Bible,” Loren Petrich declared: “There are...scientific difficulties in the Bible.... In the part of Leviticus which lists proscribed animals, we find that...grasshoppers have four legs.... [B]ut the number of legs possessed by grasshoppers should have been easy to find, since several people in the Bible reportedly ate grasshoppers, and one can always count the number of legs a grasshopper has before eating one” (1990). Farrell Till had much to say about the wording of Leviticus 11:20-23 in his article about “Bible Biology”:

Many of the biological mistakes in the Bible were anatomical in nature. The Leviticus writer...was so unobservant, for example, that he apparently thought insects were four-legged creatures....

An immensely greater problem than linguistic and translation flaws in this passage is the fact that whoever wrote it consistently referred to winged insects as four-legged creatures, a mistake that practically any modern-day elementary student would know better than to make. What educated person today doesn't know that insects have six legs? We have to wonder why God, who so routinely gave scientific insights to his inspired writers, couldn't at least have opened the eyes of his earthly messenger in this case and had him count the legs on a grasshopper.... What is there about insects that would warrant writing a description (like the one in the Leviticus passage) that mentions only four of their six legs?... [T]hese insects don't “go on all fours”; they go on all sixes. That's a strange oversight from an author writing under the direction of an omniscient deity who routinely gave marvelous scientific insights to his inspired crew (1991b).

As one can see, critics of the Bible's inerrancy are not at a loss for words when

they discuss the Bible's references to insects that “creep on all fours.” But are the critics right?

Yes and no. The skeptic is right to conclude that insects such as locusts, grasshoppers, and crickets have three pairs of legs, not two pairs. But the skeptic is **not** correct in assuming that God or the Bible writers were unaware of this fact. The very idea that the Israelites, who during various plagues saw untold millions of insects at a time (e.g., locusts; cf. Exodus 10:1-20; Joel 1:4; Amos 4:9), were clueless about how many legs these creatures had, is outlandish—“people in biblical times could count legs just as easily as people today” (Hutchinson, 2007, p. 57), probably much easier. As Petrich mentioned, the Israelites not only saw insects, but they ate them (cf. Mark 1:6; Leviticus 11:22), which means they would have seen them “up close and personal.” Are we to believe that when the Israelites caught, cleaned, and put locusts up to their mouths, they never realized how many legs these insects had? The writer of Leviticus would have known this as surely as Americans know that beef comes from cows which walk on four legs.

So why did Moses use the term “four” to describe creatures with **six** legs? Likely for the same reason we refer to certain arthropods as having 100 or 1,000, legs—Moses was using a colloquial expression like one might hear on a farm; he was not writing a technical, scientific paper on the anatomy of insects. Idiomatic expressions were as prevalent in ancient times as they are in modern times. Today, we identify certain creatures as centipedes (meaning “hundred feet”), yet the “total number of legs in most species is closer to 30 than to 100” (“Millipedes and Centipedes,” 2008). We refer to other arthropods as millipedes (meaning “thousand feet”), but no millipede has ever been reported as having anywhere near the number of feet suggested by its name. The “most leggy” millipede discovered in modern times had only 750 legs (see “Most Leggy...,” 2006), while the vast majority of millipedes have fewer than 400 legs (“Millipede,” 2009). Yet, we still call these creatures millipedes. Why? Because numbers are often used as more of a designation than a literal number. (Have you ever purchased a “2 x 4,” only to find that it was more like a “1½ x 3½”?) Just as the terms centipede

and millipede signify “no more than that such insects have a great number of feet” (Clarke, 1996), the phrase “creep on all fours,” could reasonably refer to something other than insects that have literally only four legs.

Consider another example of the flexibility of names and numbers. In George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm* (1946), the pigs gave the farm animals “Seven Commandments.” The first two commandments were as follows: (1) Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy; (2) Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.” Later, as the story goes, when the pigs realized that the “slower” animals (e.g., sheep) were unable to learn the Seven Commandments, they summed up the commandments of the farm with a single maxim: “Four legs good, two legs bad.” Did the pigs suddenly mean to exclude the birds from the good, four-legged animals? No. The pigs explained that by “two legs,” they meant “man,” and by “four legs,” they meant “animal” (regardless of whether the animals had four legs, or two legs and two wings).

The skeptic must admit the fact that numbers often represent something more than a literal number. But if this is the explanation to Moses' use of the term “four” in Leviticus 11:20-23, then what did he mean? Why did he use the expression “winged creeping things that go upon all **fours**” (Leviticus 11:20, ASV, emp. added)? The fact is, he did not define the expression for us (though his contemporaries surely knew its meaning). The phrase likely means that, in contrast to birds (listed just previously—Leviticus 11:13-19), which walk **upright**, “winged creeping things” walk **horizontally**—they “go upon all fours.” Skeptics may not like this explanation (as it exonerates the Bible writer of any discrepancy), but they cannot argue with the fact that we often use similar language. If Farrell Till, Steve



Wells, or other Bible critics have ever referred to centipedes and millipedes, one wonders why they would have a problem with Moses referring to the flying things that walk horizontally as “winged creeping things that go upon all fours.”

CONCLUSION

What does it say about skepticism when one of its leading voices over the last few decades gives four “superb” examples of Bible discrepancies that are then logically explained rather easily using everyday, common sense? McKinsey and others claim to “take enlightenment to the biblically benighted” (2000, p. 14) with the type of “discrepancies” discussed in this article. However, it is the skeptic who needs to be enlightened concerning the simple, easy-to-understand truths of God’s Word. Yes, even those statements about bats, birds, and bugs, rabbits, rodents, and rumination, are truthful, defensible, and understandable.

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it (John 1:3-5).

For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light (John 3:20-21).

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ERRATUM

In the June 2009 issue of *R&R* (the article titled “The Problem of Evil”), due to an electronic glitch, text was omitted on p. 44, column one, line 14. The text reads: “Those people pray f Barker, 2009.” The text should read: “Those people pray for their beloved children to live, and they die” (Butt and Barker, 2009). Please make this correction on your copy and accept our apology for this inadvertent error.





NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

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We at Apologetics Press continue to place serious emphasis on the task of helping people of all ages know more about the God Who created them. Through the years, we have learned that if we can begin at a very early age, we enjoy more success in our efforts. Parents understand the logic behind this reasoning, because they know that bouncing babies have inquisitive minds that are anxious to “soak up” almost everything they experience. Their busy little hands and feet help them explore the world around them during practically every waking moment. But so do their little eyes and ears. Therefore, in our ongoing quest to reach **all** ages with the biblical message of God’s astounding creation, we are pleased to report the release of our second set of Creation Cards.

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